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LIFE OF DR. TOM LOVELL - C. Howard Ross, M.D.

FROM WASHTENAW COUNTY TO CHINA IN 1847 - F. Clever Bald

LIFE OF DR. TOM LOVELL

by C. Howard Ross, M.D.

Introduction

My first recollection of Tom Lovell (and his numerous degrees) goes back to 1911. At that time I visited in Ann Arbor, sleuthing for admission to the University the following year. He was pointed out to me by William H. Maier, son of Judge Maier of Troy, Ohio. Lovell was lecturing to some students on a black tarvia sidewalk in the 600 block of East Madison Street. One of the boys ran to the basement of the Beta Theta Pi fraternity and secured a soap box. This Tommy immediately mounted and gave the boys the remainder of his tirade. I remember his storming about the modern church, and saying that a minister's philosophy was no more elastic than the prejudice of his richest church member.

In 1912, as a freshman, Iwas captured by a gang of howling sophomores on a cold November night. A lad from Cheyenne, Wyoming, was another victim. We were herded towards the old horse trough at the foot of State Street and within expectorating distance of the Michigan Central depot. The Wyoming lad was commanded to give his high school yell or be dunked; and if it wasn't good, he would be dunked good and plenty. Half way through "C-H-E-Y-E-N-N-E" --- there was a loud splash. Now it was my turn. The command-- "Something classical or be dunked!" I rattled off: O-tite bate, tibitanta tyrani tuleste." Someone yelled, "That's too damned classical!" As a reward, down I went into the horse slobber and one-celled algae, top coat and all.

Then along came "Dr." Tom Lovell. "Dr. Lovell, you are about to be baptized," yelled the leader. Tommy mounted the trough, told the boys about mob scenes in London, and came up with, "Would ye byes have it said that Dr. Tom Lovell was all wet?" One impudent youngster yelled, "Give us a sermon on Pro-Anti-Transsubstantiationalism!" Tommy said, "Ther' ain't such a word in the English language." Back came the mocking reply: "Oh, yeah? Prexy Angell says there is!" Lovell drew himself up proud: "I'll be askin' Dean Cooley, and if he says so, there is, and I preach on it."

The crowd began to move on. Tommy came by me and said casually, "You'll catch your death, me lad. Here, sneak along the terrace of the Cartholic Church, make it to home and a warm bawth!" That I did.

Early Years

Thomas Lovell was born March 18, 1863, at Wellingsborough, Northhamptonshire, England. The parents were poor. The home was but a hut. Education was a scarce luxury. His mother was ingenious in making ends meet and self-reliant in the struggle for existence. His father had no education and demonstrated very little ambition.

At the age of six, Lovell went to a park and heard Huxley, "the Bulldog," defend Darwin's theory. Tommy listened and said, "Tommyrot!" His mother, when told of this, exclaimed, "We'll have the son's head examined." To the doctor they went. After a routine check-up, the great medic gave a decision. Said he, "This kid has brains enough for three!"

By the time age twelve had rolledaround, Lovell was initiated into boxing, and by fourteen he was "like a cat in a ring." (His words, meaning good, indeed.) He became an apprentice cobbler as a youth. No ABC's were learned until he was fourteen, and after that he learned to read and write. His total formal schooling did not exceed twelve months.

In 1883 our hero made his way to London to be trained as an army officer, but a crushed hand produced a discharge. Then came travel in the British Isles. I have learned from his old friend, George Clark, however, a cobbler in East Ann Arbor, and now completing 75 years in that trade, that Tom was at one time a captain in the Salvation Army in London; and also a "preacher of sorts" in his own home town.

By 1907 Tom had a family of fast growing children. He was 44 years old, and jolly old England was going to pot in a depression. He says, "One word describes it -- deplorable!" During that year he and his family emigrated to Canada, flitting about Quebec and Ontario without an anchorage for about two years. About 1909 Mrs. Lovell and the children settled in Chatham, Ontario, but Tom came on to "the Athens of the West," as he referred to Ann Arbor. I do not believe Mrs. Lovell ever lived in Ann Arbor, and the only recorded time that she set foot in the town was to view her husband's remains.

Cobbler and Poet

Tom is known to have had two cobbler shops, probably at different times: one at 1215 South University Avenue and, the more famous one, at the corner of Detroit Street and Fifth Avenue. Four others are vaguely remembered by old friends. He soon began to lecture to the students on any and every subject, but he did not begin to write until 1912. By then he could honestly nail up his famous shingle:

DR. TOM LOVELL---POET and COBBLER
Hospital for Sick Shoes

Let him tell you how he began to express himself in writing, with only twelve months' education. He says in a signed statement: "In 1912 I sang a lot of songs on the Campus at Michigan. I bought a new one, took it home and sang it. The song said to me, 'You are slow." I said 'Why?' The song then told me, 'That is another man's composition. Write your own.' 'All right,' I said, 'I'll do it,' and what's more, it's been done!" Whereupon he then urged all people to discover themselves and become ambitious, like him. Then says he: "You will be brave, strong, fearless; victory is sure. Like me, you will get to the hilltop.'"

Before long Tom was publishing. The folder of one of his proudest hits, "Goodbye Sweetheart," was decorated with the drawing of a boy and girl going down a winding lane. It is copyrighted by Dr. Tom Lovell. The first stanza goes

"Sweetheart, the day is waking,
So, dear one, you must not sigh.
I hear the bugles calling
And I've got to say goodbye."

The chorus ends as follows:

"In the battle fighting
Mid shot and shell
I will be dreaming
Of my sweetheart Nell!"

(Do we dream in battle?)

Kings and Potentates

In 1915 Tom published a serious little booklet entitled "Seven Gems from the Pen of Dr. Tom Lovell." The introduction states that he is the author of the two biggest hits ever sung; namely, "Goodbye, Sweetheart" and "As I Looked at her up in the Tree."

Well, did he hide his light under a bushel? He did not! He immediately flattered the King and Queen of England and President Wilson, with a copy of the "Little Gems" dedicated to each in turn. Back came replies, which he later included in his book entitled "Dr. Tom Lovell's Precious Treasures." From the White House: Woodrow Wilson did not deviate from his famous style. Said he: "May I not express my appreciation?" From Buckingham Palace, 22nd July, 1915: "The private secretary is commanded by the King to acknowledge receipt of Dr. Tom Lovell's letter of July 27, with accompanying copy of 'Seven Gems'." Again from the Royal Family, November 19, 1915: "The private secretary is commanded by the Queen to acknowledge the receipt of Dr. Thomas Lovell's letter of the 1st instant and of the verses enclosed in it, and to express her Majesty's thanks for the same." Shirley Smith, Vice President Emeritus of the University, states that he saw the letter from Queen Mary displayed in a window on State Street.

Football and Other Poses

About this time it became the fad to photograph Tom in an astonishing variety of roles. In the Michigan Daily edition of November 25, 1916, there is a signed photograph of Dr. Lovell in football uniform, in running position with a football under his left arm.

Let him tell you how he began to express himself in writing, with only twelve months' education. He says in a signed statement: "In 1913 I dreamed a lot of songs on the Campus at Michigan. I bought a new one, took it home and sang it. The song said to me, 'You are slow.' I said 'Why?' The song then told me, 'That is another man's composition. Write your own.' 'All right,' I said, 'I'll do it.' I said, 'Maybe, I'll be dead then!' Whereupon he then urged all people to discover themselves and become ambitious, like him. Then says he: 'You will be brave, strong, fearless; victory is sure. Like me, you will rest in the stillness.'"

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The article reads: "Dr. Tom Lovell, Ann Arbor Poet Laureate, is placed at full-back, entirely through his ability as a punter. If his kicks are like his poetry, they will certainly be over the heads of everyone on the field."

A Daily photographer and a reporter with a suit case would accost Tom anywhere and everywhere. A cut-away coat and stovepipe hat furnished a favorite pose. Sweater and boxing gloves were popped upon him, or track suit, or cap and gown. He would pose for the boys immediately, and would admire his picture in the Daily office early next morning. He haunted the Daily office.

"With dignity he wore the mantle of absurdity," as the Detroit Free Press put it. "He became Michigan's Professor of Harmless Relaxation."

Those Fabulous Degrees

As the years passed, the Michigan Daily published Tom's verses. Deliberately or not, he became the "Dean of Burlesque Verse." He was declared to be "Michigan's Poet Laureate." Much of his composition was so bad that the students clamored for more, and more they received. Gradually fanciful degrees were heaped upon him, and though they were of "sophomoric invention," he gathered them to his bosom, good, bad, and indifferent. Though he felt plagued at times, he never let a new degree slip through his fingers. He felt "only he had the talent to deserve such spurs."

Tom himself signed a type-written card, "My Honorary Degrees -- The Cobbler Poet," listing twenty such absurdities as A.W.O.L. (America's Writer of Literature, or Artist with Old Ladies); S.O.S. (Society of Scribes); T.N.T. (Thinks New Thoughts); D.O.E. (Doctor of Evolution). One of these had quite a story: Lt. Col. of Archery. Two students swiped a letter-head of the American Botanical Society, wrote a flowery message, and conferred the title. When one of them met him on the street, he said, "Dr. Lovell, or do you prefer to be called Lieutenant Colonel?" Back came the answer in pure Cockney and with magnificent unconcern (according to W.R. Humphreys in a letter to Dr. Randolph G. Adams): "It's quite immaterial. One is a milit'ry honor, the other academic." This typed card also listed Tom's favorite songs, stated that he was "lined up with Lincoln and Roosevelt," and "mentioned for President of the U.S.A."

Many more degrees popped up as the years rolled away. I do not know of any publicity, no matter how unflattering, that met with his refusal. He would say, "I can tike it. Even when it's a one-sided compliment, it shows they are still thinking of me and hankering after me talents."

As late as April 22, 1928, the Michigan Daily reflects on Tom's "Autobiography in Education" and quotes a signal honor known as "Chancellor of Diction" Which was received on fancy stationery from the Chancellor of the Exchequer of Chicago. This document was signed in a great dash and flutter by none other than Mr. I.M. Goofy. Mr. Goofy expressed first his congratulations and then his surprise that Dr. Lovell had not been chosen president of the U. of M. by the Board of Regents in 1924. He said that he would present the book to Cal Coolidge; mentioned the eagerness of the Book-of-the-

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Tom himself signed a type-written card, "My Honorary Degrees - The Soldier Poet." listing twenty such absurdities as A.W.O.L. (Inventor's Writer of Literature, or Artist with Odd Ladies); S.O.S. (Society of Scribes); T.N.T. (Thinks New Thoughts); D.O.E. (Doctor of Evolution). One of these had quite a story: Lt. Col. of Archery. Two students swipped a letter-head of the American Botanical Society, wrote a flowery message, and conferred the title. When one of them met him on the street, he said, "Dr. Lovell, or do you prefer to be called Lieutenant Colonel?" Back came the answer in pure Cockney and with magnificent unconcern (according to W.H. Humphreys in a letter to Dr. Randolph G. Adams): "It's quite immaterial: One is a military honor, the other academic." This typed card also listed Tom's favorite songs, stated that he was "timed up with Lincoln and Roosevelt," and "mentioned for President of the U.S.A."

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As late as April 22, 1958, the Michigan Daily reflects on Tom's "Autobiography in Education" and mocks a signal honor known as "Commissioner of Election" which was received on lady stationery from the Chairman of the Executive Officer of Omnesco. This document was signed in a great hand and flutter by none other than Mr. I.M. Goofy. Mr. Goofy expressed first his congratulations and then his surprise that Dr. Lovell had not been chosen President of the U. of M. by the Board of Regents in 1924. He said that he would present the book to Cal Coolidge, mentioned the campaign of the Hook-or-Crook

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Month Club and also the competition among European publishers, not to exclude the Russian, Czecho-Slovakian, Jugo-Slavian, Turkish and Scandinavian.

Ambition

Tom was always urging the importance of ambition. One of his signed cards says, in part: "Start with ambition; develop poetic genius, song-writing genius, literary attainments, by being one determined to get to the hilltop. Ambition will win by self-discovery." In one of his books he reveals his own experience with awakening ambition: "In 1912 I discovered myself, and found out very quickly that I was a practical, intelligent and original writer. Students are gentlemen, master minds, the best personalities I wish to know." He shows the same idea in reverse by his oft-repeated poem "Don't let them laugh you out of it!", and such lines as "They tell me I am crazy" and "Columbus faced the waves mid sneers and jeers." It was this driving ambition, no doubt, that prompted him to force himself on the attention of famous or prominent people.

Thus we find him approaching Judge A. J. Tuttle of the U. S. Court Chambers, Detroit, back in 1918. He sends the judge some verses and goes on to say:

"I have written a poem to President Wilson,
And one to King George of England too.
Another one to Queen Mary and Mrs. Wilson,
So -- I thought I would write one to you."

Of course the judge is most flattering in his reply. Then Tom lets him have it!-- "I have written 700 pieces of poetry and prose. I'm only a cobbler, but recognized by Dean Cooley and Prof. Wenley. This shows power and fibre." He goes on to say that his song was not written by Harry Lauder or Irving Berlin, and, therefore, did not go over. He then requests permission to sell the song "Goodbye Sweetheart" on the streets of Detroit. He assures the judge, "I won't stand to argue if they say 'No' when I ask, 'Be so kind as to buy a copy.' "

Application to the Regents

The idea expressed in the "I. M. Goofy" letter (page 4) that Tom's name had been thought of as a candidate for the presidency of the University, is not merely a bit of imaginative spoofing. The Michigan Daily of March 1, 1925, carried a long-faced article under the heading:

"PRESIDENT'S POST DRAWS CANDIDATE
Dr. Lovell's Qualifications Supported
by Alumni and Students".

Thereupon was printed the pitiful letter of candidacy to the Board of Regents of the University of Michigan.

It read in part: "If the Regents can see me for the vacancy, I will make of Michigan the leading University of the World. Practical knowledge should be stressed rather than the more theoretical subjects." He then refers to English history and includes Sir

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Thomas Lovell and Lord Lovell, both powerful in their day. He speaks of his original knowledge and simple teaching. "Look at the men, gone from Michigan, who have known me. I gripped their hands and emptied into their life, mingled with them to the midnite hours. They always said, 'Come back soon!' " He quotes from President Angell as saying, "Now, don't let nobody stop you, for there is some good stuff left in you yet."

He refers to Lloyd George of England as a cobbler like himself; he stepped into a crisis, so why not Tom? He obviously saw nothing ridiculous in the inference.

He closes by saying: (with student help?) "Wishing all the Regents long life, health, strength, and travel; leaving myself in your kind hands, I am, gentlemen, your obedient servant in waiting,

Yours truly,
Dr. Tom Lovell."

Never once did he relinquish a title!

Tom's Political Influence -- the Hoover Election

The Michigan Alumnus of November 11, 1928, had its share in the Lovell-baiting fun. It stated "Doc Lovell elected Hoover-- or prophesied the election." Tom is quoted as saying, "One candidate is sife, and the other isn't sife. It's impossible to estimate the part my statement played in Hoover's victory. I thank God he is in." There followed a hint that probably Tom was going to Washington to serve in Hoover's Cabinet. The Daily had previously avowed: "Tom Made the Washington Papers--Hoover Sends Warm Thanks."

The Statue

Along about this time there seems to have been quite a furore about a statue of Tom. Dr. Mark Marshall tells me that many years earlier, during World War I to be exact, he saw a bust in a store front at Forest and South University which was "the spitting image" of Dr. Tom Lovell. But it was in 1928 that the Daily became interested. On March 3rd it printed the headline: "Dr. Lovell Exposes Display of Statue as Publicity Scheme."

The bust had appeared in the window of a State Street store. Doc put it there. It had been cast and molded in 1917 by the son of a professor. The Daily further clarified matters: "Tom did not pose at 75¢ an hour. The sculptor, to relieve monotony, turned from football's big, rough, and strong type to the intellectual type -- such as Dr. Tom Lovell."

The statue presents a striking figure, -- morning coat, stove pipe hat, and all. In such an array Tom was introduced to house-party guests on one occasion as "the president of the University of Michigan," and on other occasions as "adviser to three generations of presidents."

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The News Stand

The reason for the "publicity device" just mentioned was that Tom had taken in his famous cobbler's shingle and had launched a new enterprise. In October, 1928, the Daily bears the headline:

"Dr. Tom Lovell's Newspaper Stand Graces Entrance to Arcade
Covered Newsstand shelters Campus Poet, Scientist,
Philosopher who Possesses MORE DEGREES than a Fahrenheit
Thermometer."

The reporter then waxed eloquent in his description. "The stand possesses three decks, the size of a Great Lakes steamship. Each deck protrudes from under the one above. The shelves fold up to enclose a thief-proof compartment, held by a chain as big and bright as the Atlantic Cable." The structure was said to be made of Persian mahogany, "there is so much grist in the grain." Though a label said "Grand Rapids," Tom maintained, "I am the architect." "A credit to the Campus," said the good Doctor.

Tom the Philosopher

As we go through the collected volumes of Tom Lovell's verse and prose bits, we note a growing struggle with ideas. The sentimental ditties give place to attempts at philosophy, and a light shines at times.*

On every popular subject of the day he has his comment. For instance:

On the Hen and the Egg -- "Could an egg build its own nest?
Can an egg sit and lay?"
On perpetual motion -- "Green leaves, seed time, and harvest."
On the Fourth Dimension -- "Silly nonsense."
On the effect of knowledge -- "You can't know anything and remain innocent."

"It all lies in three: Sky, Earth, Sea."

The idea of evolution continued to plague him badly. "No, man did not come from a monkey," he maintains stoutly. "It means unfoldment," he grants. "But it can't change my right hand into my left." He engaged in mighty debate on the subject with Railroad Jack, and although he gladly accepted degrees such as "Founder of Evolution," he remained unconvinced. In "A Theory of a Theory -- A Reply to Charles Darwin" he becomes sarcastic:

"Fill the tin with Salmon.
Fill the house with furniture.
Fill the head with Brains!"

A. F. Sherzer has many recollections of Tom's anti-evolution crusade. This is his choisest story: One day he met Tom on the Diagonal Walk and urged a vacation. "'Tain't sife to get away," was the reply. "How's that?" "Well, the University is plannin' a course in Evolution, and I must stay in Ann Arbor and head it off!"

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*Editor's Note: Dr. Ross's article contained a long tabulation of the titles of Tom Lovell's powms and prose pieces as listed in the indexes of his books. This we omit here for lack of space. Any reader who wishes this information may consult Dr. Ross's original manuscript, in the Michigan Historical Collections, Rackham Building, Ann Arbor.

The News Stand

The reason for the "publicity device", just mentioned was that Tom had taken in his famous cobbler's shingle and had launched a new enterprise. In October, 1929, the Daily bears the headline:

"Dr. Tom Lovell's Newspaper Stand Offers Business to Anyone
Covered Newsstand Shelters Campus Joe's Satchels,
Philosopher who Possesses MORE DOLLARS than a Barometer
Thermometer."

The reporter then waxed eloquent in his description. "The stand possesses three decks, the size of a great Lados steamship. Each deck protrudes from under the one above. The shelves fold up to enclose a thief-proof compartment, held by a chain as big and bright as the Atlantic Cable." The structure was said to be made of Persian mahogany. "There is so much gilt in the grain." Though a label said "Grand Rapids," Tom maintained, "I am the architect." "A credit to the Campus," said the good Doctor.

Tom the Philosopher

As we go through the collected volumes of Tom Lovell's verse and prose bits, we note a growing struggle with ideas. The sentimental dilettee give place to attempts at philosophy, and a light shines at times.*

On every popular subject of the day he has his comment.
For instance:
On the Ilum and Omega -- "Could an egg build its own nest?
Can an egg act and lay?"
On perpetual motion -- "Green leaves, seed time, and harvest."
On the Fourth Dimension -- "Silly nonsense."
On the effect of knowledge -- "You can't know anything and remain innocent."
"It all lies in three: Sky, Earth, Sea."

The idea of evolution continued to plague him badly. "No, man did not come from a monkey," he maintains stoutly. "It means unfoldment," he grants. "But it can't change my right hand into my left." He engaged in mighty debate on the subject with Railroad Jack, and although he gladly accepted degrees such as "Founder of Evolution," he remained unconvinced. In "A Theory of a Theory -- A Reply to Charles Darwin" he becomes sarcastic:

"Fill the tin with salmon,
Fill the house with furniture,
Fill the head with Freud!"

A. T. Shreder has many recollections of Tom's anti-evolution crusade. This is his choicest story: One day he met Tom on the Diagonal Walk and urged a vacation. "Think's safe to get away," was the reply. "How's that?" "Well, the University is planning a course in Evolution, and I must stay in Ann Arbor and head it off!"

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*Editor's Note: Dr. Hoer's article contained a long tabulation of the titles of Tom Lovell's poems and prose pieces as listed in the indexes of his books. This we omit here for lack of space. Any reader who wishes this information may consult Dr. Ross's original manuscript, in the Michigan Historical Collections, Newman Building, Ann Arbor.

Failing Health

As indicated in the Daily and the Michigan Alumnus in October, 1929, Doc. Lovell had begun to fail. Disappointments, heaped upon him by Washington, D.C., and the Board of Regents, are hinted as contributing causes. In announcing that Lovell was leaving Ann Arbor for a rest home in Canada, the Daily says, "Another Michigan tradition has gone to pot like Joe's saloon." A nervous breakdown is mentioned. Future conversations among patients in the rest home are described; "Some will dwell on tonsils, but Doc Lovell will spout philosophy."

The Alumnus affectionately states that Lovell is as familiar as the squirrels; that he abandoned cobbling to become "the Newsie of State Street." He is described as a poet of "great volubility and versatility;" that "no decent 'M'Book has been considered complete without one sample of his poetic effusion." It further states that Tom just missed being "The Greatest American."

So poor old Tom did not escape spoofing even on the brink of the "Down Hill Journey."

The next January he came limping back to Ann Arbor. He had endured a stroke. The verve was gone; his face sagged and there was a slurring of speech. The Daily stated that he was to enter the County Poor House after a long illness. Retirement was forced upon him. He was broke. The newsstand had gone bankrupt. He could no longer feed himself.

Death

Tom Lovell died at the Washtenaw County Home on May 16, 1930. His death certificate was signed by the Pittsfield Township clerk and is on file at the Washtenaw County Clerk's office. Burial took place in Forest Hill cemetery with the Rev. Arthur Stalker, retired Methodist minister, reading the service.

Mrs. Lovell came from Chatham, Ontario, for the occasion, but none of the five children appeared. Only the son David had ever visited Tom in Ann Arbor.

Eulogies appeared in the Detroit Free Press, the Ann Arbor News, and the faithful Michigan Daily. Headlines read: "Doc Lovell, Campus Socrates, Long a Michigan Tradition, Dies." "Old Tom Lovell, Doctor of Evolution, Lieut. Col. of Archery, Newsboy, Orator, Writer, Politician -- Dies." Colorful details followed: "talked to over 100,000 students in his life;" "present at all assemblies -- simply closed up shop;" "most popular speaker on any program;" "his vagaries left under-grads in wonder;" "Michigan loses a unique, gentle, and heretical figure;" "Was he a fool, or an infinitely wise man?"

Twelve years later Tom was still in the news. In its April 4, 1942, edition, the Michigan Alumnus announced that the University of Michigan planned to collect all the pamphlets and fugitive writings of Dr. Tom Lovell, "known for his homely philosophy, poetry, wit, and wisdom."

Failing Health

As indicated in the Daily and the Michigan Alumnus in October, 1929, Don Lovell had begun to fail. Disappointments, heaped upon him by Washington, D.C., and the Board of Regents, are blamed as contributing causes. In announcing that Lovell was leaving Ann Arbor for a rest home in Canada, the Daily says, "Another Michigan tradition has gone to pass Jack's saloon." A nervous breakdown is mentioned. Future conversations among patients in the rest home are descriptive: "Some will dwell on Sonatas, but Don Lovell will speak philosophy."

The Alumnus effectionately states that Lovell is as familiar as the equilibrium; that he abandoned cobbling to become "the Howells of State Street." He is described as a poet of "great versatility and versatility;" that "no lecture 'M'Book has been considered complete without one sample of this poetic effusion." It further states that Tom just missed being "The Greatest American."

So poor old Tom did not escape spoofing even on the brink of the "Down Hill Journey."

The next January he came limping back to Ann Arbor. He had endured a stroke. The nervo was gone; his face sagged and there was a slurring of speech. The Daily stated that he was to enter the County Poor House after a long illness. Retirement was forced upon him. He was broke. The rowsestand had gone bankrupt. He could no longer feed himself.

Death

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Mrs. Lovell came from Chatham, Ontario, for the occasion, but none of the five children appeared. Only the son David had ever visited Tom in Ann Arbor.

Eulogies appeared in the Detroit Free Press, the Ann Arbor News and the Michigan Daily. Headlines read: "Don Lovell, Dramatic Scribe, Long a Michigan Institution, Dies." "Old Tom Lovell, Doctor of Devotion, Lieut. Col. of Artillery, Dramatic Critic, Author, Writer, Philosopher -- Dies." Colorful obituaries followed: "Toiled to over 100,000 students in his life;" "Present at all assemblies -- simply dissed up along;" "Much popular speaker on any program;" "His voyages left with grads in wanderlust;" "Michigan loses a unique gentle, and humorous figure;" "Was an icon, an intimately wise man."

Twelve years later Tom was still in the news. In its April 4, 1942, edition, the Michigan Alumnus announced that the University of Michigan Clubs had collected all the sayings and fugitive writings of Dr. Tom Lovell, "Known for his humor, philosophy, poetry, wit, and wisdom."

Aftermath; Comments of Citizens

Of the dozens of former students, faculty, and townspeople interviewed in preparation for this paper, I found almost none who did not remember Tom Lovell: orating from the top of the large rock at the corner of the Campus, -- standing in deep snow singing his latest song,-- mounting the stage at the "Madge" in an amateur show, -- basking in new titles at Starbuck's, -- picking up a hail of red hot pennies with a "Thank you, young gentlemen," -- proceeding serenely with his State Street lecture after being showered with a bag of flour from an upper window.

His fellow cobblers, Clark and Cooth, both also from England, have a rich flow of memories. Both rated Tom as a great man in spite of certain peculiarities. O. A. Moe, Campus barber, says that Tom ranked second only to himself in recognizing Michigan faces. Vice-President Marvin Niehuss recalls that when he appeared as a freshman in 1920, he was astonished at Tom's greeting: "Ah, a new face on the Campus!"

Mrs. Tom Biddle remembers that Lovell used to store his well-worn Bible in the Biddle Book Shop, Nickels Arcade. He would get into a frothy State Street argument with the students, then come running into the shop, seize his Bible, pour his walrous moustache over a passage, and fly back to his tormentors with a newly inspired conviction.

Ann Clinton, retired teacher from Jones School, used to march her first graders out amid the neighborhood, sometimes passing the cobblershop. She says: "He was such an innocent man, coming out of the shop and placing the hand of blessing upon little trusting foreheads."

For myself, I have never forgotten the favor he did me as a terrified freshman in November, 1912. He was so sprightly then, maneuvering his arms as he walked lightly along. When I returned to Ann Arbor in 1927, the frame of Lovell had slumped, the pants were more baggy, and the facial expression was less keen, indeed.

It is easy to classify him as a "town character." But you cannot dismiss him as such. His brain, however it departed from the expected normal, has left an imprint upon us probably more penetrating and pregnant than those of the wise ones who laughed at him -- and with him. Yes, an innocent man, and warm-hearted. Though he suffered from vanity, he loved humanity, especially the student fraction.

In addition to those quoted by name in the text, grateful acknowledgment for their reminiscences is made to Bee Nichols, Homer Heath, George Wild, George Earle, Roy Kirkpatrick, Dr. Alexander Ruthven, Peter Van Boven, Dr. Russell Malcolm, W. R. Garthe, W. J. Mundus, G. W. Fletcher, Roy Spokes, Prof. Walter Loy, Ford Hinchman, Prof. Blackett, Howard Peckham, and Mayor Bill Brown.